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ABSTRACT

Eight work force literacy initiatives were conducted in British Columbia (BC), Canada. The primary objectives and key activities of the initiatives were as follows: (1) alliance development (developing partnerships and linkages promoting and supporting work force literacy); (2) public awareness (conducting presentations and media relations and producing a bulletin); (3) business incentives (conducting direct mail campaigns, business breakfasts, and an awards program); (4) labor awareness and support (designing materials and resources to raise awareness of the need to address work force literacy issues at all levels of the labor movement); (5) practitioner development (piloting an electronic conferencing system for work force literacy practitioners); (6) new program support (providing resources, referrals, and general consultation to foster new programs); (7) accredited curriculum design (exploring the feasibility of developing university-accredited training for work force literacy practitioners); and (8) portfolio evaluation (researching the utility of electronic learning records for employees and employers). The following conclusions emerged from reviews of the initiatives: (1) however time-consuming and intangible, relationship building is the key to promoting work force literacy; (2) there is no work force literacy "field" in BC; (3) resources for "core" activities remain insufficient; and (4) benchmarks, measurable impacts, and strategic rigor are needed. (MN)

Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives

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Final Report

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2) Alliance Development	5
3) Public Awareness	10
4) Business Incentives	12
5) Labour Awareness and Support	15
6) Practitioner Development	18
7) New Program Support	21
8) Accredited Curriculum Development	23
9) PLA Portfolio Evaluation	27
10) FINANCIAL SUMMARY	28

Executive Summary

Intent

With funding from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) of Human Resources Development Canada, Literacy BC has completed the implementation of Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives – a series of projects intended to:

- *Help employers, unions, and educators recognize their direct stake in and responsibility around workforce literacy;*
- *Increase the demand for and usefulness of the information and consultation services that are available to employers, workers, and educators; and*
- *Develop strong, collaborative partnerships around workforce literacy issues and programs.*

While originally intended to be staggered in implementation between November 1, 1998 and October 31, 1999 – the eight initiatives were not completed until the end of February, 2000.

Activities and Outcomes

More detailed descriptions of each of the eight initiatives – specific activities and outcomes, general reflections, and sample materials – make up the balance of this report. In brief, though, the eight initiatives include:

Alliance Development

Developing partnerships and linkages that promote and support workforce literacy within and beyond BC's borders.

Public Awareness

Presentations, media relations, and the production of our *Learning Curves* bulletin.

Business Incentives

Direct mail campaigns, a series of business breakfasts, and an awards program.

Labour Awareness and Support

Materials and resources designed to raise awareness at all levels of the labour movement about the reasons for and methods of addressing workforce literacy issues.

Practitioner Development

Piloting an electronic First Class conferencing system for workforce literacy practitioners.

New Program Support

Providing resources, referrals, and general consultation so as to foster and support new workforce literacy programs in BC.

Accredited Curriculum Design

Exploring the feasibility of developing university-accredited training for workforce literacy practitioners.

PLA Portfolio Evaluation

Research into the utility of electronic learning records for employees and employers.

Key Issues for Consideration

Reflections relating to each of these individual initiatives are provided in the following pages. Panning back to the entire process and all the projects undertaken, we see the following issues as being the most key:

1) However Time-Consuming and Intangible, Relationship-Building is What Makes the Greatest Difference...

More than any other of our activities, the relationships we have built within the business, labour, and educator communities in BC is having the greatest positive impact:

Increased Ownership

Commitment to this issue has grown significantly – particularly among the Business Council, the BC Chamber of Commerce, and the BC Federation of Labour. An example: When we met with Jerry Lampert, the President of the Business Council of BC, to discuss whether and how the BCBC would continue to support the Initiative and participate on the Advisory Council now that Keith Gray had retired – Jerry assured us that the Initiative would continue to be a priority for the Business Council and that although the part-time education consultant replacing Keith Gray could *not* continue all of Keith's committee work, he *would* continue to participate on the BC Workforce Literacy Advisory Council.

Increased Awareness

While we still encounter "the glaze" among some business, labour, and media representatives, we know that awareness and understanding around workforce literacy issues *is* increasing. Where we once would have "scripted in" remarks about basic skills – key business and labour leaders are now speaking to the issue of workforce literacy of their own accord.

Increased Influence

Because we are perceived to be non-partisan, we are allowed to "stand in many rooms". As a result of the trust we have gradually built up with the various constituency groups, we are able to share different perspectives and even build bridges among groups that typically don't have a good working dialogue. This is true for business and labour groups as well as for groups within the educator community – unionized vs. non-unionized, private vs. public sector, etc.

Opportunities for Convergence

Because we are allowed to “stand in many rooms” we are in the unique position of knowing what almost every constituency group is thinking or doing in relation to workforce literacy, education and training. We are able to see just how common their agendas are – and we are beginning to create some synergy between the different groups that they would not otherwise be in a position to create.

2) There is no Workforce Literacy “Field” in BC...

The extent to which we have been successful in relationship-building and awareness-raising is probably equivalent to the extent to which we have *not* succeeded in building capacity in the “field” of workforce literacy.

The opportunity for us to develop and pilot a university-accredited training program for workforce literacy practitioners *is* there. Evidence of sustainable take-up is not. It is a “cart before the horse” situation. The “field of workforce literacy practice” is ill-defined in BC – and perhaps elsewhere. Views and aspirations regarding standardized competencies, training, and credentialing are, quite literally, all over the map.

Furthermore, the fractures within BC’s education community are deep. The Provincial Accord on Government Training has pitted public-sector deliverers against private-sector deliverers. The CLC’s Training Protocol has pitted public-sector, unionized deliverers against private-sector unionized deliverers. The as yet unresolved Community Skills Centers Evaluation and BC Labour Market Development Agreement perpetuate the anxiety over delivery “turf”.

3) Resources for “Core” Activities Remains Insufficient

Being “BC’s first point of contact” for workforce literacy continues to be a challenge in terms of resources. However successfully we have “dressed them up” as discreet projects in the past, the information and consultation services we provide within and beyond BC’s borders are ongoing, core activities. There is no funding for core activity from the Provincial government – and Federal funding is limited. Unfortunately, and ironically, the more our discreet projects succeed, the more ongoing activity is generated.

4) We Need Benchmarks, Measurable Impacts, and Strategic Rigour...

Over the last four years, Literacy BC has undertaken numerous strategies for promoting awareness, supporting action, and fostering collaboration around workforce literacy issues – and can identify numerous strategies for continuing to do so. However, the *impacts* of past strategies have been difficult to measure. For example, questions we cannot as yet answer – but whose answers are important for effecting long term and meaningful directions for the future – include:

Awareness

Educators, unions, employers, and the media *are* becoming more aware that the basic skills of our workforce *is* an issue – but how do we record and benchmark that awareness in ways that allow us to set measurable goals for the future? And what *are* the most impactful strategies for getting different stakeholder groups to take ownership in this issue?

Program Activity

What are the many ways workforce basic skills issues are being addressed by BC employers, unions, and educators – and with what outcomes? How do we document these in ways that allow us to set measurable goals for increasing programs and program impacts in the future?

Delivery Capacity

What practitioners, facilities, delivery models, and funding support are currently available to employers and unions interested in upgrading workforce skills? What are the gaps that need to be filled – and how best should they be filled?

Policy Directions

Who are all of the groups advocating for policy changes around adult education and what would a “map” of their issues produce in the way of a common agenda? How best can this common agenda be developed, promoted, and implemented?

Leadership and Sustainability

Who is the most appropriate agency (or agencies) to “own and drive” workforce literacy issues in BC? How are the *ongoing* activities that promote and support workforce literacy – the provision of information, consultation, and referral services; the maintenance and lending of resource holdings; the compilation and maintenance of program/practitioner data; the participation in regional and national workforce literacy events and committees – to be funded in the future?

Next Steps

In January 2000, Literacy BC submitted a funding proposal to the NLS for its “*Creating a Sustainable Future for Workforce Literacy in BC: Research, Consultation, and Strategic Planning for the New Millennium*” project. Its implementation is intended to build on our successes to date and address the challenges we face. While the project entails a number of initiatives, two are particularly key:

- *A province-wide consultation* that will collect, analyze, and document benchmark data on awareness, opinions and perceptions, activity, and impacts/measures relating to workforce literacy issues among employers, unions, educators, and the media. It includes qualitative, one-on-one interviews and/or focus groups with key decision makers; a quantitative 300-person telephone survey; the collection of program and practitioner profiles; and a series of informal meetings and forums in 23 communities throughout BC.
- *Policy/Action Forums* with business, labour, and educators intended to “map out” where each group’s interests around workforce literacy and related issues converge – and develop an actionable plan for realizing their common agenda.

The NLS has agreed to fund our “*Creating a Sustainable Future*” project. We are grateful for their financial support – and for their valuable counsel.

Alliance Development

Intent

As originally proposed, our intent was to formalize linkages between Literacy BC and some 25 BC organizations representing business, labour, and educators so as to:

- Solicit support around workforce literacy issues from related stakeholder groups;
- Facilitate information-sharing and strategic policy convergence; and
- Establish an influential collective to provide informed advice to federal and provincial governments.

As detailed in our March 1999 Interim Report, this project was modified for three reasons:

1. **Timing:** The educational policy "landscape" in BC has become a rough terrain on which to build the Alliance as it was originally envisioned. A number of recent developments had created policy confusion and/or uncertainty about the role and future of training providers in BC. As a result, discussions around policy and alliances with many of the groups identified as prospective Alliance members would not have been productive.
2. **Duplication:** About half the organizations we intended to approach about the Alliance were either current or prospective members of the more informal BC Workforce Literacy Advisory Council. It seemed the ongoing development of the Council might provide a meaningful interim step towards building the Alliance.
3. **Scope:** The Alliance was originally intended to focus on partnership building and advocacy around workforce literacy within BC. In reality, our work touched on and required us to build partnerships and provide support *outside* BC as well. The workload "relationship building" entails is huge – and we did not have the resources in place to do both well.

For these reasons, and with agreement from the NLS, we redefined our intent as being to:

- Postpone the development of a formal Alliance until greater clarity emerges around the implications and outcomes of tuition-free adult basic education, the ABE Transitions Project, the Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures, Phase II of the Labour Market Development Agreement, cutbacks to Forest Renewal BC training expenditures, and the development of the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission; and
- Let the further development and expansion of the BC Workforce Literacy Advisory Council serve as an interim step toward formalizing linkages between business, labour, education, and government stakeholders.
- Develop and support *informal* partnerships both within and beyond BC borders;

Activities and Outcomes

Initial Research and Planning

Before modifying our intent for this project, we mapped out profiles of some 30 prospective Alliance member groups – in terms of the key players and their key issues. We also explored the process for facilitating dialogue between these groups with outside experts.

BC Workforce Literacy Advisory Council

This is an informal and volunteer stakeholder-representative advisory council that provides guidance and support to the BC Workforce Literacy Initiative. At the commencement of these eight initiatives, the Advisory Council was comprised of:

BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council	Jim Lippert
BC Chamber of Commerce	Ian MacLeod
BC Federation of Labour	Irma Mohammed
Business Council of BC	Keith Gray
Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology	Devron Gaber
Gallagher & Associates	Paul Gallagher
Macmillan Bloedel	Dwayne Leskewitch
Vancouver Community College	John Cruickshank
Vancouver Richmond Health Board	Stu Noble

Over the course of these initiatives, the Council evolved through several career changes. Following on his resignation from the Vancouver Community College, John Cruickshank became the Acting Executive Director of the Advanced Education Council of BC. Keith Gray retired from the Business Council of BC. Jim Lippert resigned from the BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council and assumed a management position with Highway Constructors Limited. While all three agreed to continue participating on the Advisory Council, both John and Keith stepped down from it shortly thereafter – John having taken a consulting contract in New Zealand and Keith for personal reasons.

The BCBC appointed Ed Wong, their part-time Director of Educational Partnerships, to take Keith's place on our Advisory Council.

Much of our work with the Advisory Council is done one-on-one. We worked particularly closely with the Business Council of BC and the BC Chamber of Commerce on the Business Incentives Project – and with the BC Federation of Labour on the Labour Awareness and Support project.

As a group, the Council met for 2-hour meetings on:

February 8, 1999
May 28, 1999
November 18, 1999
February 18, 2000

Partnerships and Linkages *Within* BC

BC Business Employability Skills Board (BCBESB)

In addition to providing input on its mission statement and objectives, we agreed to serve as one of its Founding Directors. We participated in two strategic planning sessions for the new Board – and agreed to serve on its Executive, as Treasurer.

BC Business Summit

We participated in the November 1998 BC Business Summit and in several follow up events related to the Summit – the chief partners for which are the BC Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of BC.

BC Federation of Labour (BCFL)

Irma Mohammed from the Federation sits on our Advisory Council – and we, in turn, sit on the BCFL's Education Committee and Literacy Subcommittee. As well, we made a point of meeting directly with the new President of the Federation, Jim Sinclair, to discuss the importance of addressing workforce literacy issues to the labour movement.

BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

We met several times with the Executive Director of the BCSTA to discuss workforce literacy issues and its relevance for the K-12 school system.

Consortia of Community Skills Centers (CSCs)

We met regularly with Vicki Renner, the President of the Consortia of Community Skills Centres (CSCs) to discuss CSC activity around workforce literacy. In April of 1999 we delivered a 90-minute seminar at their Annual General Meeting about the Initiative and how we might work more closely together on workforce literacy issues in the future.

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

We met with Lynn Jackson, the Federal Manager of the Labour Market Development Agreement Secretariat of Human Resources Development Canada, to learn more about the progress of BC's Labour Market Development Agreement – and to explore ways that we and HRDC's regional office might work more closely together around workforce (and other) literacy issues in the future. Subsequently, we met on several occasions with HRDC Regional management to discuss program delivery and policy issues and various strategies for community-based linkages and partnerships.

Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC)

We met on several occasions with ITAC's Chair, Dale Parker, and its CEO, Kerry Jothen to discuss workforce literacy issues as they relate to the trades – and how ITAC might specifically address basic skills issues as part of its own activities.

We also participated, along with Dale and Kerry, in a UBC/BCBC Business Summit Breakfast on December 1st – intended to pick up the threads from the Business Summit's human resources and training session. We then began discussions as to how our two organizations might work together, along with Michael Goldberg of UBC, to further promote dialogue on these issues among the business, labour, and educator communities.

Private and Public Sector Delivery Groups

We engaged in numerous discussions (and provided some mediation) around the implications of the government's "Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures" and the CLC's Training Protocol for public and private sector unionized deliverers. (Our position was always steadfastly in support of whatever most benefited the learner.)

Simon Fraser University

In addition to our work with SFU on developing university-accredited training for workforce literacy practitioners, we co-authored an application for a SHRCC-funded research network intended to foster and develop the interest and skills of workforce literacy practitioners in undertaking much-needed field research.

University of British Columbia

Building on his popularity at the E.C. Business Summit, we asked Dr. Michael Goldberg of UBC to speak at one of our business breakfasts (see Section 4). We also began working with Mike and ITAC on strategies for pulling business, labour, and educators together around issues of workforce training policy and practice.

Linkages and Support Outside BC

ABC CANADA

We agreed to participate on a conference planning committee (since cancelled); provided editorial support to its *Learning at Work* newsletter; and contributed two person days of time to working with Peter Calamai on the 16-page literacy insert ABC CANADA commissioned him to prepare for the September 1999 issue of Saturday Night magazine.

Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA)

We participated on the Steering Committee overseeing CAMA's national, NLS-funded Municipal Workplace Literacy Project.

Manitoba Association of Workplace Education Consultants (MAWEC)

We helped plan and participated in the March 3-5th Practitioner Development Think Tank in Winnipeg which MAWEC organized for the NLS.

Milwaukee Center on Education and Work

We participated on the Logistics Planning Committee for its 1999 conference and on the Marketing Committee for its 2000 conference.

Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL)

We provided information and resources in support of MCL's Literacy Action Day in February 1999.

National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)

We, along with several members of our Advisory Council, met with Christine Dodge, the new Director of the NLS in the Spring of 1999. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the progress that has been made around workforce literacy issues here in BC and to share perspectives on priorities for the future. The entire Advisory Council also met with Brigid Hayes in November 1999 to review our progress to date and to discuss future strategies.

PLAR '99

We assisted with the promotion of this national conference on prior learning assessment and recognition, held in Vancouver on November 1999.

Western Canadian Workplace Essential Skills Training Network (Wwestnet)

We sat as a BC member and regularly contributed to 3-day planning meetings and hour-long conference calls supporting the work of Wwestnet.

Reflections

- In all respects, the Advisory Council performs its role effectively. We value their support and counsel – and rely on it regularly.
- Relationship-building is slow, time-consuming, challenging, and produces intangible results – in the short term. It is also the most impactful of our activities in terms of raising awareness, fostering a sense of ownership, building bridges, and unearthing opportunities for convergence.
- Being “the first point of contact in BC” on workforce literacy issues continues to be a challenge, from a resources perspective.
- Patience must really be a virtue. Ironically, the Alliance for Lifelong Learning has, almost of its own accord, become a reality under our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project.

Attachments

Alliance for Learning: Preliminary List of Prospective Members
 Advisory Council: Potential New Members
 Monthly (and Not-So-Monthly) Advisory Council Updates
 Advisory Council Contact Information

Public Awareness

Intent

Our intent was to meet the increasing demand from business, educator, labour, and public sector groups for information and/or presentations about workforce literacy by:

- Speaking to key groups and delivering workshops and conference presentations;
- Producing a bulletin for insertion in newsletters already being widely distributed by business, educator, and labour groups; and
- Executing a media relations strategy to increase press coverage of workforce literacy issues, developments, and events.

Activities and Outcomes

Presentations

We distributed our *Making the Case* literacy presentation template to some 25 interested individuals and groups throughout the province. It consists of speaker guidelines, topic-specific presentation scripts, and supporting overheads. Work continues on the development of *Making the Case* factsheets.

We delivered a 90-minute workshop at the Annual General Meeting of the BC Consortia of Community Skills Centres on April 29th – raising CSC Managers' awareness of the support available to them through the BC Workforce Literacy Initiative and unearthing opportunities for further collaboration in the future.

We also delivered the keynote presentation at the first of our *Workforce Skills: The Business Imperative* breakfast series at the Hotel Vancouver on May 7th, 1999. The presentation, entitled "Getting Over the Glaze" was intended to provoke the business community to rethink its priorities around workforce training issues. The event was attended by about 35 people, including the Presidents of the BC Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of BC.

Learning Curves Bulletin

One thousand copies of two issues were produced for October, 1999 and for March 2000. The bulletin attempts to balance the views and activities of business, labour, and educators – as they relate to workforce training issues. Reactions to the newsletter have been favourable.

Media Relations

We drafted a preliminary media relations strategy targetting 3 print publications – The Vancouver Sun, Business in Vancouver, and BC Business – as well as CBC radio and television

Considerable time was devoted to media relations activity in the Spring of 1999, including:

- working with BC Business magazine to help shape (and provide contact information) for an August article about employer innovation around training and workforce skills development
- working with CBC television on a story about employer experiences with workforce basic skills initiatives
- arranging BC site visits and interviews for Peter Calamai who was commissioned by ABC CANADA to produce a 16-page insert on the continuing literacy challenge for the September issue of Saturday Night magazine.

Reflections

- Our intent in assembling *Making the Case* factsheets was to capture in “quick read” format the most provocative and up to date data around literacy as it relates to very specific issues. However, given that literacy *does* relate to so many other issues in society, there is a massive amount of literature and research to sift through and synthesize. From the standpoint of cost-effectiveness, it is an activity that might best be undertaken as a national project from which all provincial literacy coalitions and other organizations would benefit.
- Researching, writing, producing, and distributing a newsletter – particularly one that tries to balance differing viewpoints – was far more work than we anticipated. In the future, we will ensure adequate resources are in place to produce *Learning Curves* – particularly given how well received it has been.
- As valuable as it would be to have the BC media more savvy and vocal about literacy issues, our media relations activity did not prove to be a productive use of our time. Extensive media relations activity with three publications and with CBC radio and television resulted in one sidebar reference to workforce literacy, complete with misquotes, in an August BC Business article. As well, despite 5 hours of dialogue with the author – no reference was made to workforce literacy in Peter Calamai’s 16-page literacy insert in the September issue of Saturday Night magazine. While professional media relations expertise is expensive, it might be a more productive use of resources than the “do it yourself” approach.

Attachments

A Call for Action: BC’s Workforce Literacy Initiative
Workforce Literacy IS an Issue – Flyer Series
 Making the Case
 Getting Over “the Glaze” – SAMPLE Presentation
 Learning Curves
 BC Business Article
 BC Business Ad
 Calamai Insert

Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives
 Final Report – August, 2000

Business Incentives

Intent

Our intent was to cause employers to see the value in addressing and supporting the basic skills needs of their workforce and to help them to understand how they might do so – and, more specifically, to:

- Arrange two large direct-mail campaigns providing employers with provocative facts about workforce literacy and information about the support and resources available through Literacy BC;
- Stage a series of breakfast events for business with a speaker or speakers who would make a compelling case for workforce basic skills upgrading in the context of other “burning” business issues; and
- Design an awards program recognizing business leadership around workforce literacy issues.

Activities and Outcomes

Direct Mail Campaigns

Our direct mail campaign engaged a variety of business organizations in promoting our *Workforce Skills: The Business Imperative* breakfast series. Information about the breakfasts was accompanied by our *Workforce Skills Really IS An Issue* flyer series. We estimate the combined reach of our own mailouts and broadcast faxes – and those of the BC Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of BC, the BC Human Resources Management Association, the Vancouver Board of Trade, and various sectoral groups – was in the neighbourhood of 7,500 Lower Mainland businesses.

The Breakfast Series

Working with the Business Council of BC and the BC Chamber of Commerce, we planned and staged a *Workforce Skills: The Business Imperative* Breakfast Series at the Hotel Vancouver on May 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th.

In all, some 20 well known speakers and panelists from the business community agreed to participate in the series. Not only did The Vancouver Sun, Business in Vancouver, and BC Business magazine agree to sponsor the series, they made their Editors-in-Chief available to moderate one of the breakfasts.

Detailed Briefing Notes were prepared and distributed to all speakers, panelists, and moderators in advance of each breakfast event.

Promotional materials were distributed between mid-April and the end of May, and included:

- Weekly fax-back flyers, distributed by Literacy BC, the BC Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of BC, the BC Human Resources Management Association, the Vancouver Board of Trade, and various sectoral groups.
- Print ads for The Vancouver Sun, The Province, Business in Vancouver, and all the Lower Mainland community weeklies published by the BC Newspaper Group
- public service announcements on CBC radio
- datebook listings in The Vancouver Sun, Business in Vancouver, and the Georgia Straight
- postings on a dozen or so related websites

Excepting the last minute cancellation of one of the speakers, the Breakfast Series went off without a hitch. Speakers, panelists, and the media moderators all viewed their events as successful. Each breakfast was well attended, by between 35 and 60 people – between one-third and one half of whom were from business; the balance were from government or the education sector.

Many of the attendees expressed an interest in having the series delivered on an ongoing basis.

“Leadership in Literacy” Business Awards

Working with the Business Council of BC and the BC Chamber of Commerce, we developed a *Leadership in Literacy* Awards program that would recognize business leadership around training issues according to specific criteria in four awards categories. Provided we could find an “anchor” corporate sponsor, the Awards program would be promoted during our *Workforce Literacy: The Business Imperative* Breakfast Series in May and would culminate in a gala awards ceremony on September 8th, 1999 – International Literacy Day.

Pacific Press, Business in Vancouver, and BC Business all indicated their interest in providing media sponsorship for the awards program.

Customized letters, information packages, and/or proposals were developed to secure an “anchor” corporate sponsor for our *Leadership in Literacy* awards programs. Of all those who we approached, Sprint Canada was the most interested and had verbally indicated their willingness to provide \$25,000 in sponsorship for the awards program; unfortunately, events in the telecommunications industry required them to undertake a sudden restructuring and our agreement fell through.

We began discussions with Syncrude Canada about launching a Western Canadian *Leadership in Literacy Awards* program but, given all the other projects we had underway and upon the recommendation of the NLS, decided to drop or at least postpone the idea.

A Celebration: Literacy, Learning, and Life

While we were not successful in launching the *Leadership in Literacy* business awards program as planned, we worked with Canada post to co-host *A Celebration: Literacy, Learning and Life* on September 8th 1999 – International Literacy Day. It was a lively and enjoyable event, with 100+ guests attending – many of whom were from the business and labour communities.

Reflections

- While our *Workforce Skills: The Business Imperative* Breakfast Series was a far more ambitious and time-consuming undertaking than the three, single-speaker breakfast events we had originally envisioned, it was one of the most successful and worthwhile projects we undertook. It was effective in cementing relationships with key business organizations and in building greater awareness and generating further interest around workforce skills issues among business and educators.
- Our attempts to find a financial sponsor for our *Leadership in Literacy* Awards were not successful. Fundraising activity of this nature is immensely time-consuming – much more so than we had anticipated. Then again, maybe timing is everything. As a result of their relationship with us as part of our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project, the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) is crafting an awards program recognizing leadership in workforce training, including basic skills.

Attachments

Royal Bank Awards proposal
 Celebration Invitation
 Sprint Awards proposal
 Breakfast Series Promotional flyer
 Breakfast Series: Misc. SAMPLE Letters
 Speakers' Briefing Notes
 Moderators' Briefing Notes
 Misc. SAMPLE Advertisements and Events Listings

Labour Awareness and Support

Intent

Our intent with the originally proposed Employer Relations project was to promote more successful employer relations by producing a brochure profiling the successes of joint labour/management literacy programs and by staging a negotiating workshop for affiliates' joint committee representatives, education officers, and shop stewards.

However, the outcomes of a February 1999 BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) Think Tank on Literacy suggested more fundamental awareness-raising activity should occur before undertaking the employer relations initiative. With the approval of the NLS, we modified our original intent to that of producing an array of materials and resources designed to:

- Increase awareness and understanding among Federation Officers, Executive Council Members, Locals, and District Labour Council Members of the need for and benefits of literacy and lifelong learning; and
- Provide affiliates' education officers, joint labour/management committee members, shop stewards, and others who are involved in training with information, resources, and support that will help to further union awareness and activity around workforce literacy.

The project was renamed Labour Awareness and Support.

Activities and Outcomes

BCFL Policy Statement on Literacy

(November 1998)

Working with the BCFL's Literacy Subcommittee, we developed the draft of a Policy Statement on Literacy in November of 1998. Delegates to the BCFL's Annual Convention endorsed it at the end of that month.

Think Tank on Literacy

(February 1999)

Working with the BCFL and the CLC (Pacific Region), we planned and staged a 1-day Think Tank on Literacy for approximately a dozen of those labour affiliates most aware of or involved in workforce literacy issues. The purpose of the event was to develop a short- and longer-term strategy for BCFL activities around workforce literacy.

Following the event, a written summary of the Think Tank outcomes and BCFL strategy was prepared and circulated among participants. A proposal to modify the Employer Relations project was submitted to and approved by the NLS.

Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives
Final Report – August, 2000

The "L" Campaign

(April 1999 to February 2000)

Working with the BCFL, we developed a detailed plan for implementing a campaign that was originally envisioned as including:

- profiles of all union-based workforce skills programs and providers in BC
- building participation in an ongoing, moderated, online discussion of labour issues around workforce skills as part of Literacy BC's electronic First Class conference
- producing and distributing a newsletter about lifelong learning
- producing an information "kit" of workforce skills resource materials, and posters/bumper stickers promoting International Literacy Day
- building a site about learning and workforce skills issues on the BCFL's website

Given the problems with the First Class electronic conference – outlined in Section 6 of this report – the BCFL Literacy Sub-Committee dropped this strategy.

The colourful "L" theme and graphics were conceived and production of a variety of materials – a poster, bumper sticker, folder label, tentcard, bulletin letterhead, and newsletter masthead – occurred in the Spring of 1999.

Originally, draft copy for the content of the information kit was contracted out over the summer of 1999. However, the BCFL Literacy Sub-committee was not comfortable with the drafts and, in the end, we worked through to the end of February 2000 rewriting and reformatting the copy until we were completely satisfied. In addition to the poster, tentcard, and bumper sticker, the information kit includes the following inserts:

- Literacy and Lifelong Learning Matter to All Union Members
- Labour's Commitment to Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- BCFL Policy Statement on Literacy
- Negotiating and Funding Workforce Literacy Programs
- Setting up a Workforce Literacy Program
- The Importance of Using Plain Language
- Resources
- Glossary of Terms

The "L" Campaign will be formally launched on International Literacy Day 2000. The BCFL website will mirror much of the information contained in the kit. The first newsletter will be developed and circulated in the autumn of 2000 – profiling existing union-based workforce literacy programs and requesting information on others.

Reflections

- The work of the BC Federation of Labour over the last several years has unearthed enormous potential for the labour community in BC to coalesce around this issue, build on one another's experience and successes, and create an infrastructure that supports and promotes literacy and lifelong learning throughout the unionized workforce.
- Realizing that potential will require additional funding. While the BCFL's Literacy Subcommittee is comprised of people who are both knowledgeable and passionate about workforce issues – it is a volunteer group whose purpose is to *develop* strategy rather than to implement it. While the BC Federation of Labour is very committed to workforce literacy as an issue, it is limited in the resources it can devote to sustaining such ongoing activities as researching and maintaining profiles of union-based workforce literacy programs, preparing newsletters, and facilitating networking and information sharing among its affiliates.

Attachments

Think Tank Outcomes

The "L" Campaign:

Poster

Tentcard

Bumper Sticker

Folder Labels

Information Kit:

- Literacy and Learning Matter to *All* Union Members
- Labour's Commitment to Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- BCFL Policy Statement on Literacy
- Negotiating and Funding Workforce Literacy Programs
- Setting up a Workforce Literacy Program
- The Importance of Using Plain Language
- Resources
- Glossary of Terms

Practitioner Development

Intent

Our intent was to build capacity for delivering workforce literacy programming by enlarging the number and enhancing the calibre of workforce literacy practitioners in BC – and, more specifically, to:

- Create, promote, and moderate an electronic FirstClass conference for workforce literacy practitioners and program administrators who wish to share information, explore issues, and access resources; and
- Organize one professional development and networking event for practitioners.

Activities and Outcomes

Field Development

We participated on the NLS/MAWEC (Manitoba Association of Workplace Education Consultants) Advisory Council that helped shape a March 1999 workshop in Winnipeg on national practitioner competencies, training, and accreditation issues – and attended the 2-day event as well.

Working with Margerit Roger of MAEWC and Shannon Kelly from the government of Nova Scotia, we proposed, developed and delivered a workshop called *The Credentialling of Workplace Educators and Consultants* at the Milwaukee Center on Education and Work's May 16th-18th conference, Workplace Learning: Progress Through Innovation. The session was filled to capacity; feedback was extremely positive.

Working with Simon Fraser University, we submitted an application for a SHRCC-funded research network intended to foster and develop the interest and skills of workforce literacy practitioners in undertaking much-needed field research. Funding was approved and the research network is currently underway.

In February of 1999 and again in February of 2000, we assisted Capilano College in developing a proposal for cost-shared funding to facilitate greater networking and resource sharing among labour-based practitioners. Unfortunately, these proposals were not successful.

First Class Electronic Conference

In November 1998 we began designing the structure and protocols for the conference. Workforce literacy expert, Sue Folinsbee of Tri-En Communications, was contracted to moderate the conference and we provided her with software training in December.

Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives
Final Report – August, 2000

After we decided who we would invite to participate on the conference, we developed a letter of welcome and a package of instructions and user's tips to accompany the First Class diskettes. Some 45 packages were distributed before the end of January 1999.

The Workforce Literacy electronic conference (and three sub-conferences) was launched on February 1, 1999. With Sue's excellent moderation, it was quickly up and running with a dozen or so "regulars" and additional "lurkers".

Through the Spring of 1999 we continued our call-arounds to the approximately 30 subscribers who had either never logged onto the system, or had logged on once or twice but had not returned – encouraging them to participate. While Capilano College (the network administrators) worked tirelessly to overcome the many technical complaints, ambivalence had set in among the subscribers. They lost interest in the conference altogether.

At the same time, and despite Sue's perseverance and tenacity, online activity began to wane. There just wasn't the critical mass of participants to sustain a lively dialogue. By the fall of 1999, we gave up trying.

Networking Event

Given the amount of work involved in the First Class project, the practitioner networking event was deferred to our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project – and will form part of our province-wide literacy consultation.

Reflections

- Despite an outstanding performance by moderator Sue Folinsbee, our attempts to establish an electronic First Class conference for workforce literacy practitioners was not a success. At the time and during the process, we attributed this to technical glitches with the software. In retrospect, the electronic conference did not succeed because it was a "cart before the horse" project. The demand isn't there. The "field" of workforce literacy practitioners in BC simply is not well enough defined or homogenous in its interests to sustain electronic networking.
- Whether it is an electronic conference, an actual networking event (such as our November 1997 *Literacy at Work* networking session), or the development of a university-accredited training program for workforce literacy practitioners (see Section 8) – we cannot *impose* order on something if it is reasonably contentedly disordered.
- Accordingly, one of the priorities in our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project will be to unearth and document the views and aspirations of the many and very different kinds of people we loosely refer to as "the field". We will be exploring whether and what opportunities do exist to define "the field", to build delivery capacity, and to meet practitioners' self-defined needs for professional development.

Attachments

First Class Welcome Letter
First Class Software Tips
First Class Directory
First Class Reference

New Program Support

Intent

Our intent was to foster and support new workforce literacy programs in BC by:

- Providing support and consultation to new initiatives, including participating on program steering committees;
- Responding to requests for general information and consultation – including referrals, resources, and research assistance;
- Researching and compiling directories of BC workforce literacy projects, providers, and funding sources; and
- Maintaining our library of workforce literacy resources, including ordering new materials, arranging cataloguing, and managing loans.

Activities and Outcomes

Support and Consultation

We provided program consultation services to a wide variety of individuals and organizations interested in launching new initiatives, including:

- BC Maritime Employers Association
- BC Government Employees Union
- BC Gas
- the Port Moody/Coquitlam CAMA pilot project
- the HRDC-funded TEN+45 project
- the Colony Farms Agricultural project
- BC Regional Literacy Coordinators
- UNITE
- The UFCW Local 2000 RISE Project
- Vancouver Community College
- Capilano College
- SkillPlan
- Haida Gwaii Community Futures Group
- ASPIRE
- Bella Coola Outreach
- Hastings Race Track
- The Consortia of Community Skills Centers

Referrals, Resources, and Research Assistance

We routinely responded to calls from practitioners, employers, and students requesting copies of our workforce literacy resource listing, asking for referrals, or seeking general information about workforce literacy programming.

Program, Provider, and Funder Directories

Mailing lists for workforce literacy contacts – from business, labour, education, and government – were assembled and are updated routinely.

We will continue to collect and update profiles of workforce literacy practitioners, programs, and funders as part of our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project – and anticipate publishing these before year-end.

Workforce Literacy Resource Collection

Our Workforce Literacy Resource collection numbers 250+ items. An automated library system is in place and materials are coded according to one of 12 categories:

- Curriculum Development
- Evaluation and Assessment
- Forestry-specific
- General Reference
- Information Kits
- Labour-specific
- Newsletters
- Occupational Safety
- Practitioner Development
- Programs
- Research and Policy
- Task Analysis

Reflections

- None, particularly.

Attachments

Workforce Literacy Resource Collection

Accredited Curriculum Development

Intent

Our intent was to assess the feasibility of developing a university-accredited workforce literacy practitioner training curricula and, if feasible, to prepare a strategy for its design, implementation, and evaluation. Specifically, we planned to:

- Review work around accredited training done elsewhere in Canada in order to clarify objectives and identify potential opportunities and challenges;
- Meet with Simon Fraser University and other interested groups, to determine the feasibility of and potential strategies for developing university-accredited training;
- Develop a plan for designing, implementing, and evaluating the program; and
- Seek funding for the completion of the program.

Activities and Outcomes

Initial Planning

We met in early December with the Dean of Continuing Education, the Director of Extension Credit Services, and the Director of the Centre for Labour Studies at Simon Fraser University. All were enthusiastic about the Project and, together, we established a very preliminary action plan and timeframe for exploring its feasibility.

Later that month, we met with SFU's Director of the Centre for Labour Studies and agreed on the broad parameters for the development of a diploma program in workforce literacy through the university's Continuing Studies department.

Brainstorming Session

An "informal brainstorming session" with 15-20 practitioners and other interested stakeholders was arranged at SFU Harbour Centre on January 12th to explore the issues around accredited practitioner training and to discuss the desirability and feasibility of an SFU-accredited workforce literacy practitioner training diploma program.

A background paper was prepared and distributed in advance of the meeting to summarize the broad parameters for the proposed SFU-accredited workforce literacy practitioner training

program and to relate its specific development issues back to broader, national discussions around practitioner competencies, harmonization of training, and accreditation.

The session provided valuable input and perspectives that further shaped the proposed SFU program.

Further Research

Before proceeding further, we contracted with Educational Consultant Tracy Defoe to work with us in researching the availability of training for aspiring workforce literacy practitioners in BC and in assessing the viability of working with alternative accrediting institutions viability of working with alternative accrediting institutions.

Availability

We determined that educational institutions in BC offer a range of programs designed to prepare people to work in adult education in general. These include diplomas, certificates, Bachelor of Arts in Adult Education and Graduate programs at the Master and Doctoral levels. Examples are:

- Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) from University of Victoria
- Provincial Instructor Diploma from Vancouver Community College
- Bachelor of Arts in Adult Education from the University College of the Fraser Valley / Open University.
- Diploma in Adult Education, Graduate Degree Programs in Education and other disciplines from University of British Columbia.
- Certificate in Literacy Instruction, Degree completion programs for working adults, Masters Degree for Adult Education from Simon Fraser University.

While there is evidence of a growing interest in workforce literacy as a branch of adult education among the administrators and organizers of some of these programs, there is no direct educational preparation for practice with the workforce. One of the above programs has occasionally offered brief elective courses in issues related to learning at work; another is considering 3 elective workshops on workforce-related topics.

What is missing, not only in BC but nationally, is a program of study that explores both theory and practice issues in workforce literacy education.

The Rationale for Simon Fraser University

Simon Fraser University has both a good reputation and a partnership record with business and labour in British Columbia. The University has excellent departments of Education, Continuing Studies and Business Administration and English – important considerations for establishing the Diploma Program in Workforce Literacy Education.

Simon Fraser University has a proven record of innovation and collaboration in developing new programs to meet real life needs. An example with some parallels to the proposed diploma program is the Program in Liberal and Business Studies, an interdisciplinary Bachelor of General Studies Degree program tailored to the combined experience and previous education of mid-career participants.

The University has admissions policies to increase education opportunities for non-traditional students who do not have normal university entrance requirements. The Diploma in Workforce Literacy Education helps meet the university's mandate to remove obstacles to learning and meet needs. Finally, by developing the program with Simon Fraser University, we lay the foundation for an associated Graduate Studies specialty such as a Master's degree in the future.

Proposal for Further Funding

Having established the feasibility of developing university-accredited training for workforce literacy practitioners (*Phase I*), we began drafting a proposal to the NLS to fund the subsequent phases of the development of an SFU Diploma in Workforce Literacy Education – in four remaining phases, as follows:

Phase II: Consultation and Framework Development

The purposes of this consultation and framework development phase would be fivefold:

1. Identify potential participant needs as they understand them, regarding, for example:
 - Curriculum priorities, program objectives, content, topics, learning outcomes and competencies
 - Process and learning options such as course length, timing, distance education opportunities, independent study and the like.
2. Identify other interested groups' concerns as may relate to the above. Further, the consultation would specifically document:
 - Opportunities for working together with other education providers
 - The degree of "fit" of this initiative with government's agenda
 - Key issues for business and for labour.
3. Document the skills and attributes (competencies) of Workforce Literacy Practitioners to the extent that this profiling informs curriculum decision-making.
4. Collect other information to provide more depth to planning such as
 - Demand for the Diploma program
 - On-going demand for qualified practitioners
 - Background information on existing practitioners.
5. Develop and pilot a Consultation Model.

Phase III: Curriculum Development and Promotion

During this Phase, we would bring the planning framework developed in the previous phase to the stage of a ready-to-implement program – and build on the awareness of the Diploma program resulting from the regional focus groups, electronic conferencing and the telephone interviews. Piloting the Diploma will depend upon recruiting a committed group of learners to go through the initial offerings together. During this Phase 3, while the Diploma is in development, resources would be applied to recruiting participants for the pilot cohort. The plan for promotion and recruiting would be developed as part of the detailed Phase 3 plan.

Phase IV: Pilot Implementation

Based on Phase III

Phase V: Evaluation

Evaluation would occur on two levels: ongoing or formative evaluation and summative or, in this case, end-of-pilot evaluation.

A Rethink

Although this proposal was nearly complete in the fall of 1999, we did not submit it for the following reasons:

- Our workload with the other seven of our initiatives was immense and we simply could not apply any further time or thought to future projects;
- We had no doubt as to the feasibility of developing and piloting a university-accredited practitioner training program. However, given the nature of the workforce literacy “field” in BC, we *were* (and are) uncertain about its long-term sustainability – and didn’t want to set a very expensive process in motion until we had time for further reflection.

Reflections

- Submitting the proposal for the next stages of this project in the fall of 1999 would have been a mistake. It would have been a “cart before the horse” project. There is a piece that needs to precede the Phase II Consultation we had envisioned – a broader consultation that focuses more on developing “a field” in the first place.
- Accordingly, one of the priorities in our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project will be to unearth and document the views and aspirations of the many and very different kinds of people we loosely refer to as “the field”. We will be exploring whether and what opportunities do exist to define “the field”, to build delivery capacity, and to meet practitioners’ self-defined needs for professional development.
- Having said all of that, we do *not* dismiss the possibility of developing and piloting the SFU Diploma in Workforce Literacy Education within the next few years.

Attachments

SFU Discussion Paper

PLA Portfolio Evaluation

Intent

Our intent was to explore the utility of an electronic learning record – based on the assumption that a learning record should enable a better match between individuals and training, employment, or career advancement opportunities. Specifically, we planned to:

- Undertake a thorough literature review outlining current thinking about the concept of a learning record;
- Design a process for developing and using learning records, and understanding their utility; and
- Providing limited conclusions about the utility of a learning record in the context of workforce training and adjustment.

Activities and Outcomes

Please see Dr. Kathryn Barker's Final Report (attached) for detailed project activities, outcomes, and recommendations.

Reflections

- We believe this research attests to the need for and value in further researching the "real life" application of PLAR principles – and will be exploring possible new projects with Dr. Barker on an ongoing basis.

Attachments

Literature Review
Final Report

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Financial Summary

**Eight BC Workforce Literacy Initiatives
Financial Report from November 1, 1998 to February 29, 2000
NLS File No: 3848-98/L023-1**

INCOME

	Budget	Actual	Variance
NLS Grant	\$169,350	\$169,350	\$ 0
Registration Fees	12,000	2,603	\$ 9,397
Total Income:	\$181,350	\$171,953	\$ 9,397 <i>See # 1</i>

EXPENSES

	Budget	Actual	
Travel/Accommodation	\$ 9,750	\$ 2,622	\$ 7,128 <i>See # 2</i>
Publicity	13,250	13,761	(511)
Project Management	72,750	83,252	(10,502) <i>See # 3</i>
Contract Fees	38,100	50,070	(11,970) <i>See # 3</i>
Facilities	27,900	13,390	14,510 <i>See # 4</i>
Telephone	0	58	(58)
Materials	17,350	7,645	9,705 <i>See # 4</i>
Other	2,250	1,155	1,095
Total Expenses:	\$181,350	\$171,953	\$ 9,397

NOTES:

1. Projected registration fees were not achieved as a result of scaling back the costs of the business breakfasts and deferring the practitioner networking event to our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project.
2. Unspent travel funds were the result of not attending one major conference as planned and scaling back regional presentations.
3. Together, overruns in project management fees and contract fees were necessary to cover 4 extra months of project management.
4. Unspent funds in materials and facilities accrued because we economized on the public awareness materials; economized on the business breakfast events; scaled back the awards program; and deferred the practitioner networking event into our 2000/2001 *Creating a Sustainable Future* project.